

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Birch Creek Colony pivot irrigation project: Lease # 5852	Proposed Implementation Date: spring 2007
Proponent: Birch Creek Colony Corp. 712 Dupuyer Cutoff Valier, MT 59486 (406) 279-3586	
Type and Purpose of Action: The proposal is for the installation of a 12" high pressure buried main line to serve an existing 130 acre center pivot. The purpose of the action is to increase crop yields, thus increasing profitability. A detailed map showing the project lay out is included within this assessment.	
Location: T29N – R 7W – Sec 24 SW 1/4 (Common Schools)	County: Pondera

I. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED: Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.	DNRC, Surface owner Birch Creek Huterite Colony, Surface Lessee and proponent
2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:	USDA – NRCS Federal EQIP Project
3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:	Deny the request

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS N = Not Present or No Impact will occur. Y = Impacts may occur (explain below)
4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE: Are fragile, compactable or unstable soils present? Are there unusual geologic features? Are there special reclamation considerations? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] This proposal lies within a large glaciated plain. The soils are moderately deep and vary between silt and clay loam textures. (See enclosed soils data.) The proposed pipeline will cross the cultivated land within the parameters of the pivot. Reclamation will not be required. Cumulative impacts are not anticipated.
5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION: Are important surface or groundwater resources present? Is there potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This proposal is contingent upon water availability from the B Canal diverted from the Two Medicine drainage system. The irrigation water is regulated by the Pondera Canal Company who monitors water volumes and standards. Cumulative

II. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT	
	impacts are not anticipated as a result of this action.
6. AIR QUALITY: Will pollutants or particulate be produced? Is the project influenced by air quality regulations or zones (Class I air shed)? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There will be no impact to the air shed as a result of this proposal.
7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY: Will vegetative communities be permanently altered? Are any rare plants or cover types present? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] The intent of this proposal is to increase crop production. Impacts are anticipated to be positive through increased commodity yields.
8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS: Is there substantial use of the area by important wildlife, birds or fish? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There will not be any adverse impact to fish, wildlife, or birds resulting from this proposal.
9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: Are any federally listed threatened or endangered species or identified habitat present? Any wetlands? Sensitive Species or Species of special concern? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There are no endangered or threatened species or habitat present on this site.
10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES: Are any historical, archaeological or paleontological resources present?	[N] During the field inspection there were no historic sites found. The lease records also indicated no cultural sites present within the proposed area.
11. AESTHETICS: Is the project on a prominent topographic feature? Will it be visible from populated or scenic areas? Will there be excessive noise or light? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] There are no prominent topographic features within the proposed area.
12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, and AIR OR ENERGY: Will the project use resources that are limited in the area? Are there other activities nearby that will affect the project? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] Agriculture is basically the sole industry in the area. There are no anticipated cumulative impacts to other activities in the area resulting from this proposal.
13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA: Are there other studies, plans or projects on this tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of other private, state or federal current actions w/n the analysis area, or from future proposed state actions that are under MEPA review (scoping) or permitting review by any state agency w/n the analysis area?	[N] None

III. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION	
RESOURCE	[Y/N] POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES
14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY: Will this project add to health and safety risks in the area?	[N] This project will not add to the health and safety of the area.
15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION: Will the project add to or alter these activities?	[N] This project will not alter adjacent operations.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT: Will the project create, move or eliminate jobs? If so, estimated number. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This project will create a contracting job during the installation and excavation of the main line.
17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES: Will the project create or eliminate tax revenue? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This project is anticipated to create additional tax revenue from increased production and sales.
18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES: Will substantial traffic be added to existing roads? Will other services (fire protection, police, schools, etc) be needed? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] There will not be substantial traffic added to the area as a result of this project.
19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS: Are there State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, etc. zoning or management plans in effect?	[N] None
20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES: Are wilderness or recreational areas nearby or accessed through this tract? Is there recreational potential within the tract? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] There are no wilderness areas accessed through this tract.
21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING: Will the project add to the population and require additional housing? Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[N] None
22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES: Is some disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities possible?	[N] None
23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY: Will the action cause a shift in some unique quality of the area?	[N] None
24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES: Is there a potential for other future uses for easement area other than for current management? Is future use hypothetical? What is the estimated return to the trust. Are cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of this proposed action?	[Y] This project is anticipated to increase crop yields through irrigation. Increased crop yields will thus increase trust revenue. This is a very low impact project anticipated to benefit both the State and the producer.

EA Checklist Prepared By: _____ Date: _____
Name Title

IV. FINDING	
25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:	Approve the improvement request for installing a buried mainline and pump station.
26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:	All disturbed areas will be recontoured and returned to crop production. Archaeological sites are not present within the project area. The lessee will be using Pondera Canal and Reservoir Company water shares to irrigate state land. The buried main line will reduce water loss, increase water conservation and increase irrigation efficiency. Also this project will reduce saline seep conditions found in the area. This irrigation project will benefit the school trust (common schools) and private land by increasing yields and overall crop share payments. Overall, no negative environmental impacts are expected.
27. Need for Further Environmental Analysis: <input type="checkbox"/> EIS <input type="checkbox"/> More Detailed EA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Further Analysis	

EA Checklist Approved By:

Erik Eneboe

Conrad Unit Manager - CLO

Name

Title

May 15, 2007

Signature

Date